

# Oral History

## Interview with John Herbers

### By Stephen Clark

[tape skips]

**HERBERS:** A very vivid memory, if you've ever been through that kind of experience you can...in my career I've done a lot of things since then. I've covered the White House, I've covered Congress, I covered Bobby Kennedy's presidential campaign and any number of things for The New York Times. But the memories of the civil rights movement are the strongest and the ones in which you take more personal gratification for having been there and observed it as well as being able to write about it. I never get questioned about my coverage of the White House any more, my coverage of Congress, my coverage of demographics in the United States, political movements and so forth, but I get lots and lots of questions about the civil rights movement, which is a subject that goes on and on as we move further and further away from it.

**CLARK:** So why do you think that is?

**HERBERS:** Because it was such a single event in the history of the United States. I think the civil rights movement has probably brought about more fundamental change in the country with a minimum amount of loss of life. There was a loss life, but it could have been so much heavier than it was. And of course that was because of the non-violent movement. It was accomplished in a way that touched people and it was so deep into the consciousness of the people, both black and white, that people remember it. All these other things tend to be forgotten but people remember it for that reason.

**CLARK:** Now you've been working in a newspaper in Mississippi for –

**HERBERS:** Well I was working for a newspaper in Mississippi but I was for the United Press International which was then a substantial news service. We supplied state news to about 28 radio stations and about 12 newspapers and some television stations and we covered the whole state from Jackson, Mississippi. There was a small bureau there and I was head of the bureau. In the 50s I was working there and of course 1954 was the date of the Brown v. Board which declared the segregation of schools unconstitutional. I covered the trial. That's right, well, also the circumstances leading up to it. I was doing it from Jackson and of course I made several trips up there for the trial of Emmett Till in 1955, a little more than a year after the Supreme Court decision.

**CLARK:** Is there any event that was attached to or associated with civil rights –

**HERBERS:** That's right.

**CLARK:** How did you get assigned to it?

**HERBERS:** Well, I was to cover, I was there, see we have a lot of freedom to cover things. In those days journalism was not nearly as managed from the top then as it is now. I was the bureau chief in Jackson and we covered whatever we thought was news and should be covered. On top of me, there was no resistance from anybody on covering whatever I covered. Where the opposition came from was, there was a long tradition in Mississippi where you covered white events and what white people did. You didn't cover things like the civil rights movement because it was not, it had not, this is – what I'm talking about the white press now – it was not, it was just not reported. And so when the blacks organized and started their movement for freedom there was a lot of pressure from the people we served who paid us to receive our news. They didn't want us to report the black movement. They wanted us to put the white resistance to it, but they didn't want us to report what the blacks were doing. So that's where the opposition against my reporting came from. It was not from our bosses in Atlanta and New York. It was from our clients. The people we served and got paid for.

**CLARK:** [too low to hear]

**HERBERS:** Well, it could be very difficult. It was where I had to make a decision whether we would have covered this or not or whether we were going to bow to their wishes and simply not cover it and I knew that we couldn't do it because in the first place there were a lot of clients on the outside in the North and all around the world. In the Emmett Till trial we got communications from as far away as Tokyo and Paris and elsewhere internationally. They wanted this kind of news we covered. So that made it possible for nobody in the United Press was going to resist our doing this because they knew it was important to have it. So the only opposition was what I personally faced on the ground from these people. We didn't want to lose them as clients because we were a very poor outfit to begin with and we didn't want to lose their revenues. Without them, I couldn't have stayed in the Jackson bureau the way it was. But anyway we managed to come out. After the movement came so strong and moved into Mississippi in the summer of 1964 – what they called the Freedom Summer which everybody knew by then – it was such an important event it could no longer be ignored.

**CLARK:** You talked about the Freedom Summer of '65.

**HERBERS:** By that time, by 1964, I had left the United Press and was working for The New York Times. I covered the summer of '64 for The New York Times.

**CLARK:** Going back to that era, were there any acts or threats –

**HERBERS:** Well, there was intimidation. Station manager would call up. “If I get any more of this kind of news, I’m going to cancel your service.” That was the intimidation we got. And so I had to make a decision whether to continue and it was not hard for me to do. I knew I had to do it, not only for moral reasons but for practical reasons and I was supported by our organization who was not based in Mississippi, but was based outside.

**CLARK:** So you’ve already talked about [tape skips]...

**HERBERS:** You mean all of the civil rights associated stories. Well, I covered the resignation of, I was assigned to the White House, of Richard Nixon. I covered the assassination of Bobby Kennedy in Los Angeles. I covered Dallas for four weeks after President John Kennedy was killed. I covered legislation in Congress in politics in Washington and across the country. But nothing is more vivid in my memory than or more important to what I did than what I did on the ground both for the United Press and for The New York Times in covering the civil rights events in the South.

**CLARK:** So would you say [tape skips]

**HERBERS:** It was important in my mind because it was there that you got – you couldn’t sit in Washington or you couldn’t be anywhere outside the South and not and have, and know, and have the real feeling for what was going on the way you did in those days.

**CLARK:** The legacy of that story [too low to hear]

**HERBERS:** Well, I think the legacy is very strong and the fact is there are still reams and reams of books out about it both from people from their personal accounts and historical stories and all and one legacy for me is that I have a daughter who is a professor of English at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida. And because of the experiences she heard me tell at home and her own experiences sometimes going with me to these places. She went with me to St. Augustine and she saw people marching for freedom beaten up in the town square and she was a girl then 12 years old, or 14 something like that. She was so impressed that she started a black studies program in Lakeland. She’s head of it now. And she went to Harvard to learn more about it all. And that’s one of the legacies, a personal legacy. There are other kinds of legacies that exist. People don’t dare go back to where they were before the civil rights movement existed in the way of segregation, the treatment of blacks or any other minority. It’s a thing of the past. The legacy of it has been marvelous. That doesn’t mean there’s not a lot to be done and that things are perfect now. Far from it. But it’s a very strong legacy that will live on in our history, I’m sure.

**CLARK:** Let’s talk about the [too low to hear]

**HERBERS:** [tape skips] Well, the communications, of course now, if you are covering a story like this, you could carry a cell phone around with you and you could report back to your office and give a blow-by-blow description of it.

**HERBERS:** When I covered the Emmett Till trial, we were not able to get the story out without a lot of difficulty. They had the trial on the second floor of the courthouse in Sumner, Mississippi. We had a telephone installed, and the closest we could get to the trial was on the first floor of the courthouse. And I was the only person covering it for United Press at the time. It was a story that was breaking – a breaking news story, one thing after another all day long. I would have to go down a circle of stairs, down to our telephone, phone in my reports – with a lot of local, hostile whites staring over my shoulder and listening to what I was saying – to my headquarters in, at that time, Atlanta, to put it on the wires for transmission all over the world. And that was a difficult thing for me to do at the time. Nowadays, with a cell phone, there would be nothing to it at all. I would just step outside of the courtroom, call it in, and go back in. And, getting the news out, you had to be able to get to a telephone. And sometimes a telephone, in these situations, was not available.

I covered a beating of a young man who later died in a town near Selma, Alabama, by the highway patrol. I was working then for the New York Times. I wanted to get the story to them because it was a very hot story at that time, but I couldn't because I was standing out in the square where the beating occurred, and there was no telephone in sight. I couldn't find a pay phone or anything else. So, I had to wait until I got back to Selma hours later before I could transmit the story. And it was a difficult kind of situation. And the telephone and the teletype – which we used from bureau to bureau to transmit the information – was the only communications we had in those days. And of course television, you had film. But they had to send them film in to be processed and put on the air. It took hours before it could actually appear. Now, it's almost instantaneous.

**CLARK:** And television in those days –

**HERBERS:** Absolutely. It was television that really brought it home to Americans nationwide into their living rooms, to where they could see what was going on.

**CLARK:** And it was obviously a big asset for the movement –

**HERBERS:** Well, that's right. That's right. And the people in the movement knew at that time, that if they could just tell the mass of American people what was going on – and that was a better way to do it. Reading about it later was important, but it was not as important as seeing those pictures.

**CLARK:** \*inaudible question \*only hear "What were the negatives..."

**HERBERS:** It's not nearly as negative then as it is now, I don't think, because there's such a proliferation of it now. So much is so shallow and so piece-meal. The negatives of that time were that it was a good thing, largely, but getting it out and getting it across to people was – the television people who did it, did it very well at the time. And they were given priorities to be seen on the national news shows and everything. And a lot of important things are happening now, kind of underneath the surface, that television – being so superficial – never gets to.

**CLARK:** What was the role of the black press?

**HERBERS:** The black press was very important and had been very important. The problem was that it went to the blacks. The blacks knew what was going on, and they knew after generations of mistreatment what was happening and everything. But, it was only read by the blacks. I didn't know any white people, when I lived in Mississippi, who read the black press. I didn't read it because I didn't have access to it. Dorothy Gilliam was talking about in Memphis, there was a strong black newspaper. They cover these kind of things, and people in Memphis saw copies of that. But as far as I know, in Mississippi, there wasn't any black newspaper that was covering these things, at least on a day-to-day basis. And, also, the whites who were in charge at that time were quick to spread misinformation about what the Black press was – “Oh, that's unreliable. You can't believe anything they say.” And so on and so forth. It was a totally divided black versus white community, all the way down to the presses.

**CLARK:** Would you say the black press didn't have any whites?

**HERBERS:** Not that I know of. Well, they did have reporters like me who went down there and I knew the blacks, and we could communicate with them and know what was going on in their press. But, we reported to, for example, the New York Times. And it went to New York and at that time, I doubt that there hardly any blacks, maybe in some of the black press, would read some old copies of the New York Times. But you couldn't get it on your doorstep down there like you can now.

**CLARK:** Did the photos tell the story?

**HERBERS:** Well, you know, Charles Moore's photos were so graphic. Still photos – that's what showed up in the newspapers. And that was important, as well as television, on bringing it home to people on what it was really like. You know, those pictures from Birmingham we had with the fire hoses and the dogs – that really told it. And if the white segregationists had been smart, they wouldn't have let all that stuff happen. They would have just kept things like they were and they could say, “Oh, well, you know, they're happy down here. You don't need to worry about it.” Instead of that, they turned loose the dogs and the fire hoses and let those pictures flow out of Alabama into the North. And it was very graphic in all respects.

**CLARK:** inaudible question

**HERBERS:** A very strong role. I can't remember her name, but there was a woman in Selma, Alabama, who Dr. King relied heavily on – they were always there being strong and marching. I remember once, there was a black woman who lined up in front of the courthouse in Selma, Alabama and tried to register to vote. When the sheriff resisted her and stood in her way, she nudged him or something like that. Well, they beat her down to the ground, carried her to jail, and jailed her. That kind of thing was not uncommon at all at that time. And, furthermore, in every community large and small, there were always some white women who had a conscience about these things and tried to stop them. There was a woman in Philadelphia, Mississippi, for example, named Florence Mears who was very much opposed to what was going on there. That's where the three civil rights workers were killed in 1964. And she was very strong and influential in trying to stop that kind of thing. It went on in almost every community you would go to, there would be a woman like that. It was the organization of women, prior to these times, that really slowed down the practice of lynching, because they knew it was wrong. And they persuaded their husbands and, in some cases, the wives of sheriffs who allow a lynch mob to come in, take a prisoner, and take him out and lynch him. The force of women was very strong throughout the South during this whole period.

For example, in Selma, I remember there was this big rush of religious people of all faiths coming down to Selma to participate in the marches. And white nuns from Chicago, I remember, came down. I can remember them pushing up against the police line in Selma, Alabama, with all their parts on, you know, they're nuns! And it was amazing. It really was.

**CLARK:** inaudible question

**HERBERS:** The New York Times took the lead among national newspapers in sending people down to cover this story. And the New York Times, even at that time, was a lead newspaper, and other people would tend to follow what they did at the time. We heard Claude Sitton, who was an earlier reporter covering this, although there was a predecessor before him who did quite a bit of it. But they decided after the 1954 Supreme Court decision, they decided they had editors there who were Southerners, and they knew that this was going to be a big story. So, they put a lot of resources into covering it. Then, other newspapers followed and did the same. And by the time I joined the New York Times in 1963, they were kind of the lead newspaper in covering all this. And then, of course, there were our services and the other newspapers, and there were reporters there from California, reporters from the Midwest, reporters from New England, who were all there reporting in great detail.

**CLARK:** inaudible question

**HERBERS:** Under the circumstances, yes. It could have been better, of course. It always could be better.

**CLARK:** What did journalism learn from this?

**HERBERS:** I think it learned, for one thing, the importance of television because of its bringing into the living room the real events of the world, as now we're getting real events every night, and tiresomely so, from Iraq. But, at that time, television was not known too much for bringing the story, whether it's conflict or violence or whatever it was, into the living rooms of Americans. It was people sitting around talking into a microphone at the time. And that was the, I think, primary lesson we learned about television from that time.

I know that in the deciding years of the civil rights movement, Dr. King and all civil rights leaders knew the importance of coverage. They knew that that was going to have an effect of making change and getting Congress, for example, to enact civil rights laws and all that kind of thing. Whenever they could get on television – They even set up, and I won't use any names on this, but they would set up a person to confront, say the sheriff of Selma, Alabama, and try to tease him on until he decided to beat him up – in front of the cameras. So, knowing that this would go out and appear across the nation – and the whites were so dumb about that. They always seemed to comply. They couldn't help themselves. The hatred was so deep. I'm talking about the main part of the white South. The sheriffs and the lawkeepers and the segregationists and the people affected by the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations.

**CLARK:** What would you say whites learned?

**HERBERS:** I think whites learned that the South was not as distant from them as they always thought it was. They thought that was the South, you know – is it true what they say about Dixie? You know, the old songs, and the South was distant, almost a colony. I mean, it was an entirely different situation, what happened in the South. It didn't happen in the North, and so forth. Dixie was a distant kind of place. Now, this brought back to them that this is all part of our country, and very much so.

**CLARK:** What did you learn as a person?

**HERBERS:** I learned the same thing. But you know what? The segregation was so strong for so long in the South. I remember growing up and hearing my grandparents talk about the Civil War and how mistreated the South was by the North in the war, and subsequently, segregation had been in place so long that it took a long time for me to believe that things would be changed, that it would be different from what it was. And, it was so much a part of the way of life in the South that getting it changed was such a difficult thing to undertake in the first place. But, it did change. And, it's certainly not perfect now, but it's a far different place from what it was then.

**CLARK:** How did it change you?

**HERBERS:** It changed me because I could see it up close. And I could see the feeling of people. I could follow King around and hear his sermons, and I could hear his speeches. I could see other civil rights leaders, and I could see what was happening to them, and the hatred against them. And I had never considered myself a person of prejudice, but even if I had considered myself a person of deep prejudice, I don't know of anybody in the press who covered this on a day-to-day basis, some people I know were born-again Southerners, they were changed by what they saw. You just couldn't do it with a clear conscious and not be changed.

**CLARK:** inaudible

**HERBERS:** Birmingham – I was there. I had been through all this fire hose and dog situation and all the other atrocities I had seen, all the beatings that had taken place. They happened in other places. In 1964, no '63, I guess – the fall of '63. I was totally shocked that anybody would plant bombs in a Sunday school to take the lives of four young girls. That was one of the transforming events. I mean, you couldn't be there without being totally horrified by it if you had any conscience at all.

**CLARK:** And the Emmett Till murder?

**HERBERS:** The Emmett Till murder came at a time when there was no movement in Mississippi. There was no movement in Mississippi. There was no black movement in Mississippi that I knew of – maybe on a local basis, but there was no state-wide movement. This was 1955, and there had not yet been the events that horrified blacks and white people and the consciousness of the times. The Emmett Till murder was deeply felt because of the atrocity of it and the circumstances of a young boy getting killed because he was allegedly whistling at a white woman. A 14-year-old boy – it was horrible. But, at the time, it was not a civil rights movement, as we came to know it later. To follow up on that, after it was over, it just kind of drifted away. It departed. And it wasn't until the movement and blacks reorganized across the state. It was the last state where blacks really – they did it in Alabama, Georgia, every place else except Mississippi. It came after the 1964 summer that the movement really took on a strong effect in Mississippi. And after they got the Voting Rights Act in 1965 – the Emmett Till case was an isolated event, simply because there was not a movement in place that could deal with it at the time.

**CLARK:** I wanted to start off with the article you wrote. What comes to mind... inaudible



**HERBERS:** What thought comes to mind when I see them? Well, mostly, of course, sometimes when I look at them, I think, well, I could've done a better job than that. But, then again, I think, well – of course, they remind me of the situation, of the whole movement, and writing about it, and what an exciting thing it was at the time. And I think that I probably couldn't do as well today, because of my age. (laughs)

**CLARK:** You bring up a good point about that. You had to be full of energy, full of courage, full of rage. Talk about that.

**HERBERS:** Well, I didn't think I had courage, particularly, but I did have energy, and an ability to tell a story better. On the other hand, I think that over the years, my writing style improved, which I think I demonstrated in my last book, which was published in 1987. In that, the writing was better than it was in the newspaper.

**CLARK:** We were going over some things that happened in the '60s, and I wanted to get your feelings on them.

**HERBERS:** Sure.

**CLARK:** The Civil Rights Act. What memories come to mind?

**HERBERS:** The memory that comes to mind is how quick the enforcement of it was. Of course, this was mostly a public accommodations thing, where African Americans could eat in restaurants, travel buses by public transportation, and everything on staying in hotels and that kind of thing. It went into effect, and almost immediately, all across the South – I remember Claude Sitton, one of the people who appeared on this panel, and I were doing the reporting on it. And, there was almost immediate compliance with it, at least in the major cities and the places, because by that time, by 1964, we had already gone through the experience of having people disregard the federal mandates, such as the Little Rock situation. And by that time, people knew that there was a federal law that they had to comply with. And there was a pretty good compliance in a hurry in regard to that law.

**CLARK:** What about the 1965 Voting Rights Act?

**HERBERS:** The 1965 Voting Rights Act was another one. That was the one, I think, that really broke the back of white resistance to desegregation. I can give you some examples on that. In Mississippi and Alabama, particularly, there were few places around that had allowed African Americans to vote. But the Voting Rights Act wiped out all that law. It required the counties and the states to set up immediate procedures for voting. And all of a sudden, the politics began to change.

A good example of it is James Eastland from Mississippi, who was one of the most segregationist people you've ever seen in your life, had been dead set against desegregation and also against black voting. After the 1965 Civil Rights Act, there was a man, one of the pioneer leaders in the civil rights movement in Clarksdale, Mississippi. It was a man named Aaron Henry. Aaron Henry had been there and had been an opponent of Eastland. He didn't run against him or anything, but they were on totally different sides of the fence. Anyway, all of a sudden, you had all these black people registering to vote. And the change in the attitudes of the people who had been segregationists – that doesn't mean they came around all the way and became great liberals or anything like that – it's just that they were no longer willing to talk about African Americans in derogatory terms.

Strom Thurmond is an example of another one. He ran for president in 1948 on a segregationist platform. And after that was over, suddenly he hired blacks to be on his staff. He made friends with black groups in South Carolina. He provided some money to be sent to their programs. He built up a strong support in the black community. He never would have done it without the '65 Voting Rights Act, and I think that's what made a major change in the South at that time. It was much more important than the previous civil rights laws that had been passed by that time.

**CLARK:** When you were covering it, what were some of the thoughts that crossed your mind?

**HERBERS:** You mean at that time?

**CLARK:** I mean, were you surprised or shocked by the 1964 act?

**HERBERS:** I was surprised to see that. I was, frankly, surprised that there was such quick compliance on the voting rights. But the fact was, by that time, a man named John Doar, who worked for the Justice Department as the head of the Civil Rights Division. In Mississippi, for example, he documented case after case after case after case after case after case, in which eligible black were denied their voting rights. The evidence was all out there, and it could no longer be denied. They used to say, "Well, we don't discriminate against them. They just don't pass these tests we have. We administer them fairly." Of course, they did administer them fairly. They did everything they could, but all of this was documented on how they avoided enforcement of their own laws, and there was no way they could any longer protest. And that's the reason the segregators didn't have any more fuel to fight with. They were totally uncovered, they were totally exposed on what they had been doing. So, they really didn't have a defense.

**CLARK:** What comes to mind when you hear the name Bull Connor?

**HERBERS:** Bull Connor. What comes to mind is a man who was totally prejudiced, who was vicious, who was totally tied to the political aspirations of the governor – George Wallace – who was a segregationist all the way who stood in the door to keep things from happening. And Bull Connor was the man who executed and would do cruel things to blacks to put them down. And what we didn't understand much then was that what he was doing was so blatant and so openly wrong, that the rest of the country could see that in his future. I don't even know what happened to Bull Connor after that. I don't even know now, but I'm sure he's long gone because of his age. But he was totally repudiating. And he was just – no person in America could justify his actions.

**CLARK:** What about Philadelphia, Mississippi?

**HERBERS:** Well, you know, in one respect, that was where the three civil rights workers from New York, or the North, were trapped and shot and buried under a dam. After a long months, they finally found the bodies, and the men were brought to trial. See, that was part of what they called the Mississippi Freedom Summit. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of students from colleges all over the country, but mostly from the Northern states, came down and set up private schools to teach young black people in the South, and also to come down and oppose the segregation laws, and came down in mass. And the three people who were killed were part of that. And that, in a sense, really broke a lot of the resistance in Mississippi, because it was so apparent to the world outside, all the wrongs that had been done by that time.

**CLARK:** Do you remember any... inaudible

**HERBERS:** I was there, in the state of Mississippi, doing that whole – well, from the start, I was there from the summer and into the fall. What it involved was the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, more murders, more burning of churches, and more acts of violence and acts of intimidation all across the state. I was working for the New York Times, and every day, I would call the civil rights office, which they called (inaudible), which combined all the civil rights organizations. I would call and get the lady, and she'd say, "We only had three churches burn last night. There was one black man murdered down in mid-county." And that continued on a day-to-day basis throughout that summer.

**CLARK:** Did you ever envision 34 years later –

**HERBERS:** I could not envision – I did not look that far ahead at that time. But it ended in the fall of 1964 when all of the whites and blacks – the college kids – went back to their homes and were no longer pursuing it. And, also, there was at the time opposition of the Vietnam War. That took a lot of the civil rights workers – particularly young people who had been civil rights workers – switched over to the anti-war demonstrations and left kind of a vacuum among civil rights. And that was the beginning of the decline of the civil rights enforcement, really, or the

effectiveness of the civil rights movement at that time. It was a very dramatic shift.

**CLARK:** This was the '60s?

**HERBERS:** It was 1965 – '64 going into '65.

**CLARK:** The riots started after that, right?

**HERBERS:** The riots in the northern cities – it started in Los Angeles in 1965 and spread for the next two or three years. Every summer, there were riots. This shifted all the attention away from the South to the big cities in the North.

**CLARK:** Do you think that was a result of the war coverage?

**HERBERS:** The riots themselves had nothing to do with the war. The riots coverage was because there were blacks in the northern cities who moved up there hoping to find a sanctuary and jobs and good living conditions away from what they had known, and what their fathers and grandfathers had known in the South. And the situation would confine them to what we would call ghettos in the big cities, and the living conditions were bad. And they had seen the progress in the South, and progress in things done by the civil rights laws for blacks in the South, and they tried to break out of the horrible conditions that they were living under and had been living under for some time.

**CLARK:** What about the March on Selma? What comes to mind when you hear that?

**HERBERS:** Well, I was in Selma from the opening of the campaign for the march for voting rights in January of 1965 until shortly before they marched on the state capitol and in Selma. Then I was transferred to Washington to try to cover the enforcement of civil rights laws nationally. But that was an extremely, I think probably the most important, movement in the South of any that had occurred before because, by that time, Martin Luther King and his supporters had perfected the art of demonstrating to the rest of the nation the injustices that were going on. You had a sheriff in Selma, Alabama, who was an extremist segregationist, and he believed in mistreating blacks, and he believed that his job was to prevent them from voting. But he would stand on the courthouse steps and not let them go inside. They would make marches every day on the courthouse, and he would stand there and prevent them. And if they got out of hand the least little bit, he would mistreat them. And then the cameras would be there taking shots of all of this, of people getting beat up on the streets, only because they warranted the right to vote. And it was a very simple thing – the rest of the nation could see it. As a result, there was this outpouring of support. People came down from all parts of the country – from California to Maine – to participate in this. A lot of religious leaders, a lot of regular civil activists, labor

unions. One of the chief ones there was the Automobile Workers Union, and they got all this support. And it was apparent, and they were, of course, by that time, building up support for the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, which happened later on after the march on the state capitol in Alabama. And of course the marches were supported by the federal judiciary, who prevented George Wallace from allowing his supporters to prevent them from having their marches. The federal courts prevented the march on Montgomery and other marches that were going on. It was probably one of the most important part of the civil rights movement in the South at that time.

**CLARK:** When you look back as a journalist, what do you think? In retrospect, do you think, "Wow, I was a part of that?"

**HERBERS:** I can believe I was a part of it, but what I never anticipated at the time and now have some sense of wonder about it, that it's taken such an important place in history. And of all the other things I covered in my career, which included some very choice assignments, covering the White House during Watergate and the Nixon resignation, including the covering of Congress at a very crucial time in the '60s, including the political movement. I covered most of the political conventions, and I covered Robert Kennedy's campaign, and was there when he got shot in California. The main thing that remains in my mind is the covering of the civil rights movement, all the way from the time I was in Mississippi through however long the movement lasted, and at its peak. The surprise is that it's been so well-remembered.

**CLARK:** Thank you very much!

**HERBERS:** Well, thank you!